

What is claimed is:

1. A ternary alloy of silver, copper and germanium containing from more than 93.5 wt% to 95.5 wt% Ag, from 0.5 to 3 wt% Ge and the remainder, apart from incidental ingredients (if any), impurities and grain refiner, copper.
2. The alloy of claim 1, wherein the weight ratio of Cu to Ge is from 4:1 to 3:1.
3. The alloy of claim 2, wherein the weight ratio of Cu to Ge is about 3.5:1.
4. The alloy of any preceding claim, containing from 1.0 to 1.5 wt% Ge.
5. The alloy of claim 4, containing about 94.5 wt% Ag, about 4.3 wt% Cu and about 1.2 wt% Ge.
6. The alloy of any preceding claim, further comprising boron in an amount effective for grain refinement.
7. The alloy of any preceding claim, containing 1-40 ppm of boron.
8. The alloy of any preceding claim, containing 5-20 ppm of boron.
9. A finished or semi-finished shaped article of the alloy of any preceding claim.
10. The article of claim 9, which is formed by casting.
11. The article of claim 9, which is at least partly produced from sheet or strip.
12. Use of an alkanethiol, alkyl thioglycollate, dialkyl sulphide or dialkyl disulfide for the surface treatment of an alloy according to any of claims 1-8.
13. The use of claim 12, wherein the alkanethiol, alkyl thioglycollate, dialkyl sulphide or dialkyl disulfide has C₁₂- C₂₄ alkyl groups.
14. The use of claim 12 or 13, wherein the alkanethiol, alkyl thioglycollate, dialkyl sulphide or dialkyl disulfide is in an organic solvent.
15. The use of claim 14, wherein the solvent containing the alkanethiol, alkyl thioglycollate, dialkyl sulphide or dialkyl disulfide is generally neutral.
16. The use of claim 14 or 15, wherein the alkanethiol, alkyl thioglycollate, dialkyl sulphide or dialkyl disulfide is in a solvent based on n-propyl bromide.
17. The use of claim 12 or 13, wherein the alkanethiol, alkyl thioglycollate, dialkyl sulphide or dialkyl disulfide is in (a) a composition obtainable by dissolving said alkanethiol, alkyl thioglycollate, dialkyl sulphide or dialkyl disulfide in an organic solvent and adding to said solution a relatively concentrated aqueous soap or detergent, or (b) an aqueous dispersion obtainable by dissolving said alkanethiol, alkyl thioglycollate, dialkyl sulphide or dialkyl disulfide in an organic solvent, adding to said solution a relatively concentrated aqueous soap or detergent, and diluting the resulting mixture with water.

18. The use of claim 12 or 13, wherein the alkanethiol, alkyl thioglycollate, dialkyl sulphide or dialkyl disulfide is contained in a polish or impregnated into a polishing cloth.

19. The use of any of claims 12-18, wherein the alkanethiol or alkylthioglycolate is selected from stearyl mercaptan, cetyl mercaptan (octadecyl mercaptan), stearyl thioglycollate and cetyl thioglycollate.